

Foreword

“In his piano concerto with orchestral accompaniment, Dvořák adheres to the classical principle of Beethoven in terms of form. [...] further progress is especially evident in the fact that the piano does not exclusively dominate, but rather forms a unified whole with the orchestra, to which it adds a new brilliance and brightness with its unique sound and ringing colour. [...] His three-movement concerto, with its elegiac, painfully hushed middle movement that speaks especially to the heart, is one of the first compositions ever written in sonata form in this country and is undoubtedly the most mature and profound work by Dvořák, the symphonist.”¹

These words of praise concerning both the work as a whole and the conception of the solo piano part appeared in a review of the première on the programme of a Great Slavic Concert (‘Velký slovanský koncert’) in Prague at Žofín Palace on 24 March 1878. It is one of the few published period reactions to the early version of Dvořák’s *Piano Concerto*.

The time of the *Piano Concerto*’s composition (1876)

Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904; ➤ Fig. 1) wrote his only piano concerto – the *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in G minor*, Op. 33 (B 63) – in the summer of 1876, when he was still an almost unknown composer. His works had begun to receive performances in Prague in 1871, and his first major success there came in 1873, when the Prague singing association ‘Hlahol’ performed his *Hymnus z básně Dědicové Bílé hory* [Hymn ‘The Heirs of the White Mountain’] (B 27) at a concert on 9 March.² Only a few of his works had appeared in print before he began work on the *Piano Concerto*.³

The thirty-five-year-old composer did, however, have plenty of experience already with various genres – for example, he had composed five symphonies, five operas (the libretto *Král a uhlíř* [King and Charcoal Burner] in two musical settings),⁴ at least

three sacred works for voices with instrumental accompaniment, and a large number of chamber music compositions and songs. Already in 1865 he had composed a concerto with piano accompaniment – the *Cello Concerto in A major* (B 10).⁵ The period from 1873 to 1875, shortly before Dvořák wrote the *Piano Concerto*, was a turning point for the composer. At the time, he was reevaluating the music he had composed until then and was intensively seeking his own compositional style.⁶ He had made frequent use of piano in his works until then both in chamber music and as instrument to accompany songs. On the other hand, he had written very little for solo piano – besides some early polkas for piano (B 1 and B 3), there are motifs from the two musical settings of the libretto *King and Charcoal Burner* (B 22 and B 43), *Two Minuets* (B 58) dated February 1876, and perhaps certain portions of the later cycle *Silhouettes* (B 32).

quently as ‘King and Collier’, but neither translated title is entirely clear to modern readers.

⁵ The *Cello Concerto in A major* (B 10) with piano accompaniment was composed for the cellist Ludevít Peer (1847–1904), Dvořák’s colleague in the orchestra of the provisional Czech Theatre. The work is in three movements that are played attacca and are tied together by the return of the theme of the first movement in the finale. They are written with the fervour for experimentation that was characteristic of Dvořák’s music from this period. In the piece, Dvořák did not apply the concertante principle of dialogue between soli and tutti (piano in this case) as he would do in his later concertos; here, the solo instrument plays throughout with almost no rests.

⁶ When the opera *Král a uhlíř* [King and Charcoal Burner] was withdrawn from the programme of the provisional Czech Theatre in 1873 after a few rehearsals, Antonín Dvořák subjected all of the music he had composed up until then to very strict criticism, and he gradually turned away from innovation based on models from the New German School and moved instead towards a style more accessible to audiences. In the field of instrumental music, this meant cutting back on the dimensions of his works and making the form clearer by tending towards a four-square metric structure, more straightforward harmonic progressions, and the use of more differentiated instrumentation. Folksong began to come to the fore as a major source of his inspiration. See Jarmila GABRIELOVÁ, *Rané tvůrčí období Antonína Dvořáka (Studie ke kompoziční problematice vybraných instrumentálních děl)* [Antonín Dvořák’s Early Creative Period (Studies on the Compositional Issue of Selected Instrumental Works)] (Prague 1991), pp. 125–138 or Klaus DÖGE, *Antonín Dvořák. Leben – Werke – Dokumente*, 2nd ed. (Zürich – Mainz 1997), pp. 139–153.

¹ –ý. [=Václav Juda NOVOTNÝ], ‘Literatura a umění. Velký slovanský koncert’ [Literature and Art: The Great Slavic Concert], *Národní listy* 18/78 (28 March 1878), p. [3]. The period announcements and reviews of performances of early version of Dvořák’s *Piano Concerto* from 1878 and 1880 are published with commentary in the *Appendix*, pp. 233–239.

² Unless stated otherwise, the source for information about Dvořák’s life and works is Jarmil BURGHÄUSER and John CLAPHAM, *Antonín Dvořák. Tematický katalog. Bibliografie. Přehled života a díla / Thematisches Verzeichnis. Bibliographie. Übersicht des Lebens und des Werkes / Thematic Catalogue. Bibliography. Survey of Life and Work*, 2nd ed. (Prague 1996).

³ *Motivy z opery Král a uhlíř* [Themes from the Opera King and Charcoal Burner, for an explanation of the translation see the following note] (B 22) (Prague: Em. Starý, [1873]); *Písně z Rukopisu královédvorského* [Songs on the Words of the Dvůr Králové Manuscript] (B 30) (Prague: Em. Starý, [1873]); *Směs z opery Král a uhlíř* [Potpourri from the Opera King and Charcoal Burner] (B 43) (Prague: Em. Wetzler, [1875]); *String Quartet in A minor*, Op. 16 (B 45) (Prague: Em. Starý, [1875]).

⁴ It was first set to music in 1871, the second setting is dated 1874. A charcoal burner – i.e., a charcoal maker. In English-language texts, the title of this opera appears as ‘King and the Charcoal Burner’ or less fre-

The year 1876, when Dvořák wrote his *Piano Concerto*, belongs to one of the periods from which there is little extant written documentation (such as Dvořák's correspondence or press announcements). Only the information written in Dvořák's preserved musical manuscripts documents the circumstances of the origins of the music he was composing at the time. An examination of the other music Dvořák was writing during this period shows that it shares with the *Piano Concerto* both specific musical motifs⁷ and often a common character trait:

“[...] in Dvořák's music, there is at once conspicuous nostalgia, even sadness, which culminates eventually in an expression of deep grief and heartfelt anguish.”⁸

This primarily involves three works from early 1876: the *Piano Trio in G minor*, Op. 26 (B 56) from January, the *String Quartet in E major*, Op. 80 (B 57) from late January and February, and the *Stabat Mater*, Op. 58 (B 71) in the version with piano, begun on 19 February and completed on 7 May (➤ Fig. I).⁹ The *Piano Concerto* was immediately preceded by songs: two series of *Moravian Duets* dated 17–21 May (Series II: B 60) and 26 June – 13 July (Series III: B 62), and one of the *Večerní písně* [Evening Songs] (B 61), dated 13 June. In July of 1876, Dvořák also seriously considered composing an opera according to one of his three known letters from that year.¹⁰ The letter also reveals the composer's less than satisfactory financial situation. He had to teach and serve as the organist at the Church of St. Adalbert in Prague. He was unable to devote himself fully to composing, although he had already twice (1875 and 1876) obtained a state stipend in the amount of 400 gulden.¹¹ Dvořák again applied for the stipend in 1876. With his application, he submitted the *Trio in G minor*, the *String Quartet in E major*, and the *Stabat Mater* from among his newest works and the *Symphony in F major*, Op. 76 (B 54) from the previous year. The application is dated 30 July 1876,¹² less than a month before the completion of the first movement of the *Piano Concerto*.

The date when Dvořák began composing the *Piano Concerto* is not documented. He had been sketching out the work at least since the beginning of August, because the lengthy first movement, then numbering 575 bars, was already fully scored for orchestra on 28 August 1876. The other movements followed very soon thereafter: he finished the slow movement on 6 September

1876 and the finale on the 14th of the same month. Dvořák entered the dates at the ends of the movements in his manuscript score, which is now the only preserved autograph source (A). The stimuli for and circumstances of the work's composition are unknown.¹³

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There are two figures of importance to Central Europe's musical culture who are associated with the early version of Dvořák's *Piano Concerto*. One of them was Karel Slavkovský (1845–1919), a famed Czech piano virtuoso in his day and a music teacher working in Prague.¹⁴ The scholarly literature claims it was for him that Dvořák composed his *Piano Concerto*,¹⁵ or at least that he wrote it with the prospect that Slavkovský would play the work, but there is no documentation of any kind for this assertion.¹⁶ The fact remains that Slavkovský was the only pianist who performed the early version of the *Concerto* in public, and both of his performances (the première and a performance in 1880)¹⁷ were unanimously acclaimed:

¹³ We know only that at the time when the *Concerto* was being written, the composer lived in the Prague flat at the address Na Rybníčku 14, where he was disturbed by the sound of a piano in the neighbourhood. See Karel HOFFMEISTER, *Antonín Dvořák* (Prague 1924), p. 27.

¹⁴ Karel Slavkovský, whose name also sometimes appears as Karel ze Slavkovských, was born on 25 January 1845, and not in 1846 or 1847 as is often stated on the basis of the period press (see the State Regional Archive in Zámorsk, Collection of Vital Records for the East Bohemia Region, 1587–1949, no. 151, call no. 552, Běstvina Parish Vital Records, 1800–1849, fols. 71^v–72^r), and he had his own music institute in Prague. Beginning in 1870, he presented concerts of his own each year, and he was also the composer of a few occasional pieces. Cf. e.g. Gracian ČERNUŠÁK, entry ‘Slavkovský Karel’, in: *Československý hudební slovník osob a institucí* [Czechoslovak Music Dictionary of Persons and Institutions], II (Prague 1965), p. 520; Ludmila ŠMÍDOVÁ, ‘Karel Slavkovský a klavírní koncert Antonína Dvořáka: K roli výkonných umělců v procesu vzniku Dvořákových koncertů’ [Karel Slavkovský and Antonín Dvořák's Piano Concerto: On the Role of Performing Artists in the Process of the Creation of Dvořák's Concertos], *Muzikologické fórum* 2 (2013), pp. 71–79. Slavkovský performed in the première of the *Piano Quintet in A major*, Op. 5 (B 28) in 1872, and two years later he accompanied Marta Procházková at the piano in the song *Kytice* [Bouquet], no. 5 from *Songs on the Words of the Dvůr Králové Manuscript*, Op. 7 (B 30). There is no documented performance by Slavkovský of Dvořák's solo piano works until 1876. Slavkovský's estate is lost.

¹⁵ Otakar ŠOUREK, [‘Foreword’], in: IDEM (ed.), *Antonín Dvořák: Klavírní koncert* [Antonín Dvořák: Piano Concerto, i.e. the critical edition of the solo part with a second piano part according to composer's autograph] (Prague 1956), n.p.: “Dvořák wrote his *Piano Concerto* for the distinguished Czech pianist Karel Slavkovský [...], who kindly devoted his attention as a performer to Dvořák's music both as a soloist and in chamber ensembles when the composer was not yet widely known.” – Earlier, however, Šourek had made more cautious and correct statements; cf. e.g. ŠOUREK, *Život a dílo Antonína Dvořáka*, I (↵ note 8), p. 287: “He was relying on Slavkovský, and Dvořák was also apparently counting on his performance [...]” For the original Czech, see p. viii, note 15.

¹⁶ A different situation, for which Slavkovský's motivation has been preserved, but for which the composition is missing, has been documented in the case of Slavkovský and Bedřich Smetana – see Slavkovský's letter to Smetana dated 6 Nov. 1879 (Prague, Bedřich Smetana Museum [CZ-Pbs], S 217/872), in which the pianist asks Smetana to compose a work for piano and orchestra.

¹⁷ For information about the performances, see pp. xviii–xix.

⁷ Cf. e.g. the chromatic descent in the main theme of the first movement of the *Concerto* with the beginning of the *Stabat Mater*, Op. 58 (B 71) or the slow secondary theme of the finale of the *Concerto* with the secondary theme of the finale of the *String Quintet in G major*, Op. 77 (B 49).

⁸ Otakar ŠOUREK, *Život a dílo Antonína Dvořáka* [The Life and Work of Antonín Dvořák], I, 3rd ed. (Prague 1954), p. 261. For the original Czech, see p. vii.

⁹ The partial sketch for the *Stabat Mater* (Prague, National Library of the Czech Republic [CZ-Pu], 59 R 2150), one of Dvořák's few surviving sketches from 1876, may help to give an idea of the way the now unknown sketch for the *Piano Concerto* could have been written down.

¹⁰ Antonín Dvořák → [Rudolf Wirsing], 3 July 1876; see Milan KUNA et al. (eds.), *Antonín Dvořák. Korespondence a dokumenty* [Antonín Dvořák. Correspondence and Documents] (hereinafter AD CD), I–X (Prague 1987–2004), here I, pp. 124–125.

¹¹ See AD CD (↵ note 10), IX, p. 158 ff.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 176–177.

“The concerto was played by our leading virtuoso, Mr. Karel Slavkovský, with brilliant technique and an impassioned delivery.”¹⁸

“The first of Prague’s piano virtuosos, Mr. Slavkovský, fully captured the spirit of Dvořák’s composition and delivered the whole piece with remarkable expression and admirable energy [...]”¹⁹

Nothing is known about Slavkovský’s opinion of the composition or its piano part. It is also unclear why he never performed Dvořák’s *Piano Concerto* later in its revised form.²⁰

A second figure associated with the early version of the *Concerto* was Eduard Hanslick (1825–1904), a Viennese music critic of Prague origin. Unlike Dvořák’s other concertos for solo instrument with orchestra (or with piano accompaniment), which he dedicated to virtuosic instrumentalists,²¹ he intended to dedicate his *Piano Concerto* to Hanslick, who was among other things a member of the jury in Vienna that awarded the state stipends mentioned above. The intention to dedicate the work to him is apparent from three letters from February 1878.²² On 5 February 1878, Hanslick wrote Dvořák to say that he would accept the dedication offered by the composer gladly and with pleasure, but six days later he added that Dvořák should not send him the manuscript, but should wait to send a printed score. Reviews of the première on 24 March 1878 also mentioned the dedication of the work to Hanslick,²³ but the surviving autograph score of the *Piano Concerto* does not include the dedication,²⁴

¹⁸ A., ‘Divadlo, umění a literatura. Velký koncert slovanský akad. čten. spolku’ [Theatre, Art and Literature: The Great Slavic Concert of the Academic Readers’ Society], *Posel z Prahy* 10/77 (27 March 1878), p. [3]; see *Appendix*, p. 235.

¹⁹ –ý. [= Václav Juda NOVOTNÝ], ‘Literatura a umění. Koncerty’ [Literature and Art: Concerts], *Národní listy* 20/106 (2 May 1880), p. [3]; see *Appendix*, p. 239.

²⁰ The first Czech performances of the revised, definitive version took place in Prague on 4 Jan. and 28 March 1884 with Ella Modřická as the soloist; see Ludmila ŠMÍDOVÁ, *Klavírní koncert g moll, op. 33, Antonína Dvořáka – raná a konečná verze* [Piano Concerto in G minor, Op. 33, by Antonín Dvořák – Early and Final Version], I–III, Ph.D. dissertation, Faculty of Arts, Charles University (Prague 2016), here I, pp. 29–30. The next public performance in Prague was not until 1898 with the soloist Josef Růžička and the Czech Philharmonic conducted by Oskar Nedbal; see *ibid.*, pp. 29–30.

²¹ The composer dedicated his ‘Cello Concerto with Piano Accompaniment’ (B 10, 1865) to the cellist Ludevít Peer, his *Violin Concerto* (B 108, 1880–1882) to the violin virtuoso Joseph Joachim, and his *Cello Concerto* (B 191, 1894–1895) to the cellist Hanuš Wihan.

²² Eduard Hanslick → Antonín Dvořák, 5 Feb. 1878 (ADCD [≠ note 10], V, p. 95); Antonín Dvořák → Václav Vladimír Zelený, [February 1878] (*ibid.*, I, pp. 341–342; incorrectly dated there “[I. 1883]”); Eduard Hanslick → Antonín Dvořák, 11 Feb. 1878 (*ibid.*, V, p. 95).

²³ –ý. [= Václav Juda NOVOTNÝ], ‘Velký slovanský koncert’ (≠ note 1), p. [3]: “The work is dedicated to the renowned Viennese music critic Hanslick, who greatly appreciates Dvořák’s talent.” Cf. also *Politik* 17/84 (27 March 1878), p. 5 and others; see *Appendix*, pp. 236–238.

²⁴ However, the composer replaced the title page during revisions before 1883, and the original has not been preserved. See *Sources and editorial note*, pp. 219–221. The title page of the early copy of the autograph (C) also lacks any information about the dedication, cf. *ibid.*, p. 222.



Fig. 1) Adolf Neumann X. A. [= Xylographische Anstalt]: *Anton Dvořák*, 1879, *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* 11/1 (26 Dec. 1879), p. 7; published as a supplement to an informative biography of the composer by Hermann Krigar (1819–1880).²⁵ The reproduction was apparently made from a photograph that Dvořák sent to the author of the article in Leipzig together with other materials.

which was neither mentioned at later performances nor in the printed edition of the work.²⁶

It therefore seems that Hanslick did not become familiar with the *Concerto* until after it appeared in print in 1883, although the possibility cannot be excluded that he had seen it earlier as

²⁵ See Hermann KRIGAR, *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* 11/1 (26 Dec. 1879), pp. 3–4; 11/2 (2 Jan. 1880), pp. 15–16; 11/6 (30 Jan. 1880), pp. 67–68; 11/7 (6 Feb. 1880), p. 79; 11/8 (13 Feb. 1880), p. 91. The *Piano Concerto* is included in a list of the composer’s works printed there, although it had not yet been published. For a reprint with Burghauser’s commentary, see Hermann KRIGAR, *Anton Dvořák. Eine biographische Skizze. Kommentar von Jarmil BURGHAEUSER* (Baarn 1991). See also ADCD (≠ note 10), V, pp. 212, 214, 226–227.

²⁶ The dedication was seemingly forgotten or was no longer important because in 1881, two years before the publication of the *Piano Concerto*, Antonín Dvořák dedicated another of his compositions to Hanslick, *Legends*, Op. 59, both in the version for piano four-hands, B 117 (see the title page of the first edition, Berlin: Simrock, 1881), and in the arrangement for orchestra, B 122 (see Berlin, Simrock, 1882). For more details about the dedication of the *Piano Concerto*, see Ludmila ŠMÍDOVÁ, ‘Nové prameny k Dvořákovu Klavírnímu koncertu’ [New Sources for Dvořák’s *Piano Concerto*], *Hudební věda* 40/2–3 (2003), pp. 191–210, here pp. 192–193. Concerning the first printed edition of the *Piano Concerto* (1883), see note 61 below.